



# APO NEWS

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## In-country training initiatives under DON

**"T**o evolve successfully through different levels of development, key parts of the economic environment must change at appropriate times. Lack of improvement in any important area can lead to a plateau in productivity and stalled economic growth," wrote three Harvard academics, including renowned business strategist Michael E. Porter, in their Global Competitive Report to the World Economic Forum.

To revitalize and strengthen national productivity organizations (NPOs) in member countries so that they can continue to play key roles in the productivity movement in the new global economic scenario, the APO revamped its Development of NPOs (DON) Program in 2007. The DON Program aims to increase understanding of the development strategies and needs of each country and the roles of NPOs, conduct research and analysis, and then act upon the findings. The NPO need assessment survey was conducted last year as the first systematic attempt to identify the diverse needs of 15 NPOs and member countries under DON Strategy, the policy component of the DON Program. More than 200 specific needs were identified after in-depth analysis of the institutional development requirements and priorities of NPOs. The outcomes of the survey were shared with the members of the Governing Body, the supreme organ of the APO, at its annual meeting held in IR Iran in April this year, where appreciation was expressed for DON Program initiatives.



Training session in progress in IR Iran

DON Implementation, the operational arm of the DON Program, has already begun translating DON survey findings into pilot projects comprising in-country training programs. "The organization of in-country training programs is the gateway to implementation of the DON Program, which aims to align the APO's country-specific services and facilities with the needs of individual member countries' directions based on their long-term development strategies and requirements," explained Secretariat Industry Department Program Officer K.D. Bhardwaj.

The APO organized two in-country training courses in Pakistan and IR Iran, with another in the pipeline for India, in association with their NPOs on a cost-sharing basis. The courses provided productivity and quality (P&Q) facilitators in NPOs and related stakeholders with firsthand exposure to the fundamental principles, tools, and techniques of overall productivity improvement enabling them to create a critical mass of P&Q practitioners. "The training details and curriculum of each course were designed in close consultation with the NPOs of each country and the APO resource speakers," Bhardwaj added.

The first course in Pakistan, 21 July–2 August, catered to participants who had already taken local basic courses for productivity practitioners. Twenty-nine participants comprising officers from the NPO Pakistan and productivity professionals and managers from the public and private sectors attended. Tariq Bajwa, former NPO chief and the national expert of the NPO need assessment survey, attended both the opening and closing sessions and stated that, "It is matter of great pleasure and privilege for all of us that Pakistan is the venue for the launch of such an important event." Bajwa also expressed his excitement at hosting the first project of its kind when welcoming local trainees and APO resource speakers during the opening session.

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The focus of the two-week course was the role of productivity practitioners in disseminating knowledge and tools in participants' organizations and nationwide. "Since it was the advanced course for productivity practitioners, the program focused on deepening trainees' understanding of advanced techniques such as work measurement, the balanced scorecard, benchmarking, knowledge management, etc., and integrating them for strategic application within organizations," explained APO resource speaker Kelvin Chan, director and principal consultant, Teian Consulting International Pte Ltd., who conducted sessions throughout the course. "Participants were very keen to assist the NPO Pakistan in multiplying the numbers of productivity practitioners to achieve a critical mass in Pakistan." Chan also conducted the second training course held in IR Iran in collaboration with two other resource speakers deputed by the APO.



Chan (standing) moderating a group discussion in Pakistan

The course in IR Iran, 2–13 August, hosted 26 participants from the government, public institutions, and private enterprises. The APO also deputed a Secretariat program officer as an observer. APO Alternate Director for IR Iran Dr. Mahmood Ghanizadeh attended the opening session to deliver a welcome speech in which he mentioned the importance of productivity sustainability in the country. In a written interview with the *APO News*, Dr. Ghanizadeh welcomed the APO's new initiatives and appreciated its efforts to provide the best services for member countries under the DON Program. He emphasized that active participation by NPOs would maximize the benefits of APO in-country programs.

"Unlike Pakistan's course, the course in IR Iran was the basic course for productivity practitioners covering concepts and practices such as productivity gain-sharing, 5S, good housekeeping practices, etc. Participants were anxious to learn from the experiences of the resource speakers in the areas of productivity promotion, integration of various techniques, and sustainable improvement of organizations," Chan explained. After commenting on participants' enthusiasm and willingness to learn, APO resource person Nina Estudillo, Development Academy of the Philippines, reported that productivity was not a new concept to most of the participants, but that the concepts and principles seemed to have been interpreted from different angles. "Participants unanimously agreed with the need to consolidate individual efforts toward a more integrated approach to strengthen and sustain the productivity movement in the country." Estudillo coordinated a workshop to formulate productivity strategies at the country level.

"The idea of the APO, an authoritative international organization, holding an in-country course in IR Iran was a great morale boost for both participants and the National Iranian Productivity Center. Trainers were really patient in answering our questions and moderating group discussions and individual

training sessions," said Senior Expert on Productivity-Productivity Affairs Shabnam Berke, National Iranian Oil Refining & Distribution Company, sharing her experience of the training with the *APO News*. She added that, "Some of our colleagues had not previously taken productivity seriously, but on the closing day, we found out that they had established their own future plans to pursue productivity. I think that proves the success of the training course."



Playing a game illustrating just-in-time principles

The course in India, the final of the three pilot projects, will be held in September. It will differ from the preceding two in that it is a basic induction course for newly recruited professional staff of the National Productivity Council. Therefore the curriculum will focus on familiarizing participants with basic productivity tools and techniques for their future roles in the NPO.

The findings and outcomes of these three pilot programs are being reviewed to fine-tune implementation methodologies and future planning of in-country courses. So far, the new initiative seems to have been successful in meeting the unique needs of individual countries and therefore accelerating national development. The APO hopes that this will be another effective tool in assisting NPOs and member countries to achieve meaningful productivity improvements and economic growth. 